

An Outline of

“A Blueprint for Efficiently Training Infantry Squad Leaders”

by

Major Timothy J. Devlin, USMC

Major S. Keller Russell, USMC

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1. **Introduction.** Squad Leaders (SL) are not trained to prepare themselves or their Marines for combat.
 - a. Base unit – the squad – is trained in a haphazard manner.
 - b. SL do not know how to train their Marines. Training responsibility is rarely delegated to SL.
 - c. SL are not prepared to make decisions in combat.
2. **Background**
 - a. Privates join battalion under Cohesion Program.
 - b. No system to insure that leaders are *trained and available* when privates arrive.
 - c. Only one-third of SL are present to meet new privates. These SL are not yet trained.
 - d. This paper suggests a system for preparing infantry squad leaders to lead Marines in garrison, in the field, and in combat.
3. **What should SL be able to do?** Make decisions and train Marines.
 - a. A few experienced SL may have seven years service, Infantry Squad Leader Course (ISLC), Ranger School, deployments, and possible combat.
 - b. The vast majority of SL are less-experienced Lance Corporals with less than two years service.
 - c. Inexperienced SL are reluctant to make independent decisions.
 - d. Good training leads to confidence and experience.

- e. Marine Corps schools fail to prepare Marines to *train their subordinates*.
4. **Preparing Marines to be Squad Leaders.** SL need to be developed *before* they take command. One-third of SL are junior Marines in Battalion after one deployment. One-third are junior Marines from the battalion sent out on FAP or CAP. One-third are NCOs from Marine Security Forces with no infantry battalion experience. All need training:
- a. **ISLC** should be required of all SL. Future SL should attend during duty battalion before new Marines arrive. ISLC never has enough seats.
- b. **Battalion Squad Leader Training Course.** Four to six weeks off-site. Battalion's main effort requires substantial overhead in vehicles, aggressors, instructors, resources, and *time*. Ideally executed before new Marines arrive.
- c. **Training the SL to Train Marines.** Battalion needs to train each SL how to train his Marines. *That is their key role - what SL do*. Two-week course ideally executed before new Marines arrive.
- Individual Training Standards (ITS) and Collective Training Standards (CTS)
 - FMFM 6-5 *Marine Infantry Squad* and FMFM 6-7 *Scouting and Patrolling*
 - How to Train: Demonstrate, execute, evaluate - to standards
 - Unit training SOPs
- d. **Non-Tactical Training of SL.** Battalion Sergeant Major can run Corporal's Course and Sergeant's Course. Not enough formal school seats exist. Future SL should be trained during duty battalion before new Marines arrive, *even if they have not yet been promoted to Corporal*. When they are promoted during deployment, no schooling will be available. FAP and CAP Marines are difficult to train. Regular NCO PME program can be built as "Battalion Leaders Certification Course" for all Corporals and above.
- e. **Sustainment Training of SL.** Companies need to sustain SL training once SL have assumed their new billets.
- Training Management. Reinforce how to apply systems approach to training. Teach how single battalion METL task generates a pyramid of multiple supporting company, platoon, and squad tasks. Brief company quarterly training plans that list what tasks will be trained that quarter.
 - Battalion-sponsored squad lane training. After new Marines arrive, battalion can run all squads through critical CTS. SL should be primary trainers to establish SL credibility, allow him to establish SOPs, and assess his new

Marines. Two-week exercise must include time for SL to train his Marines before each event. Evaluators can provide feedback to SL.

- Squad Combat Readiness Evaluation (CRE). One-week evaluation can be held after squad training cycle.
- Train the Trainer (TTT). Friday is good for SL to review next weeks ITS and CTS. Under SNCO supervision, each platoon's SL can demonstrate a portion of standards for entire group. This provides an example to each SL of how to train their squads. A well-rehearsed plan is catalyst for good training. TTT can be concurrent with other unit schools: RTO, combat lifesaver.
- Company Schools. Friday TTT, Monday SL prep time, 1stSgt PME, and TDGs.
- Keep SL informed. Post training plans, calendars, assigned tasks, and training schedules.

5. Issues

- a. Selection of future SL from current Marines is difficult because no one knows how many NCOs will join the battalion before deployment.
- b. Ten or twenty NCOs may join battalion with no infantry battalion experience. These inexperienced leaders join late, disrupt the trained chain of command, and displace acting SL. None of them will be ISLC trained.
- c. FAP and CAP Marines will become SL, but they rejoin late, after missing key training. They also disrupt the trained chain of command and displace acting SL. Few of them will be ISLC trained.
- d. Therefore, *two-thirds* of SL will not have been reasonably prepared for their role.
- e. If these issues alone could be addressed, significant improvements would be made to SL training.

6. The Criticality of Training Management

- a. Companies, battalions and above need a system of training that enables predictable unit schools, small unit training, and exercises to be planned and executed.
- b. Leaders need to understand how a single METL task at battalion generates a multitude of SL tasks.

- c. Proposed training of SL requires (1) a predictable flow of new SL, (2) a unit using a systematic approach to training.

7. **The Chain of Command**

- a. HQMC should assign NCOs from B-billets to battalions three months before new Marines arrive.
- b. Divisions should increase school seats to battalions on duty battalion, provide POIs to units conducting internal NCO schools, and establish firm training requirements and schedules.
- c. Regiments should prioritize and enforce training management processes, give duty battalion priority for ISLC and NCO schools, require all SL to attend ISLC, fill NCOs from B-billets during duty battalion, and permit FAP and CAP Marines to rotate to attend ISLC and battalion squad leader training.
- d. Battalions should establish minimum standards for SL, provide Squad Leader Training and ISLC to all SL, conduct squad lane training, conduct CRE, educate leaders on training management, and delegate sustainment training of SL to companies.

- 8. **Conclusion.** Battles are won at the squad and platoon level. Proficiency of squad leaders, the key to success, requires focused training.